

|| MAKING FIRST THINGS FIRST

WEEK 4 – AUTHORITY (Text: Matthew 12:29)

|| *“...how can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.” (Matthew 12:29 NIV)*

Have you ever come home to find your house has been burgled? Maybe you’ve wandered around the carpark where you know you left your vehicle and finally you realise it’s been stolen? Listen to the story of Mr and Mrs Bailey:

“Shortly after parking in front of the office, a well-dress[ed] businessman backed into Mr. Bailey’s car, causing no more than a slight scratch... Mr Bailey told the man to forget the incident, but the business man insisted on making compensation. He asked for the Bailey’s address and promised to send him two tickets to the [theatre].

Two weeks later, the tickets arrived, designating specific seating for a specific date [of the show]. Along with the tickets came a box of [beautiful chocolates] and a gift certificate for dinner near the [venue]. An entire [evenings] entertainment was being provided in exchange for a mere scuff on Mr. Bailey’s car. He and his wife were thrilled!!

*The night was glorious-all it had promised to be-that is, until Mr. Bailey and his wife returned home. As they pulled into the driveway, something felt eerie. Then, when they opened the door to the house, both husband and wife began to sob. They had been duped-unsuspecting victims of a slick thief who had planned their evening so that he might empty their home of all of its goods and drive away in a fully packed [removal] van. This poor couple had been completely taken advantage of because they did not understand the schemes of their enemy.” (pp 55, *The Power of Spiritual Alignment*, Frank Domazio, 2002)*

I’m sure we can all relate to that gut-wrenching moment that this couple felt when they realised they had been robbed. In fact, everyday someone is being robbed in some way by Satan, the strong man Jesus identifies as the thief who has come to **“steal, kill and destroy”** (ref: John 10:10). The Apostle Paul warns us to be constantly alert to the devils strategies. The devil wants to ruin our spiritual vitality, and his desire is to sabotage our future (ref: 2 Corinthians 2:11).

In our scriptural focus today Jesus reveals another of his **First Things**. He says that we are to *“first bind the strong man [so] that we might recover all the goods he has stolen.”* If you were able to look back over your life, what could you recognise the enemy has stolen from your life? Whether it occurred last week, last month or last year? Maybe a lifetime ago?

Today I want to help you recover what was yours. As a child of God, saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, your Kingdom inheritance includes reclaiming whatever you have lost.

Satan is on a mission to creatively, deviously, and slyly steal, kill and destroy any good thing you have in your life. || Here’s what that looks like:

- **He comes to steal:** You used to have it, but now it's gone. He has taken it from you and it no longer exists in your life.
- **He comes to kill:** Something you once had was alive, flourishing and bearing fruit but now it is dead.
- **He comes to destroy:** You once had something in your life that you knew had the potential to be powerful but the enemy stopped it, destroyed it, flattened it and crippled it.

You feel like that couple who came home and found that everything had been taken through a devious scheme, by a deceptive fiend. The **Good News** is that Jesus didn't end his statement in John's Gospel with those words. He concludes that His mission was to provide a solution that would bring back life, the recovery of those stolen things, and not as they once were but overflowing with all the potential they once held. He declares:

|| *"I have come that [you] may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10b NIV)*

The context in which our text is taken today (Matthew 12:29 – *first bind the strong man*) is found in the preceding chapter of Matthew (11:28-30) where Jesus makes a promise that everyone who would come to him would find rest, including deliverance from the burdens carried through life. **Jesus is declaring that he is the deliverer** and that he comes to bring freedom from internal and external bondages that have been collected/inflicted over our lifetime. **Jesus is declaring freedom from those bondages**, from those snares and plots that the enemy of our souls has entrapped us through his devious intentions.

By the power of the **Holy Spirit** and the finished work of Christ, Jesus has claimed the authority to defeat Satan – to bind the strong man – so that you are able to reclaim what was stolen.

Over the years there has been much discussed on this issue of **binding and loosing** (ref: Matthew 18:18). Jesus was speaking into a culture that understood the power exercised over a person by a sorcerer, a god, or a spirit that could bind a person. **Binding** was the act of tying up or forbidding the freedom of a person, in this context, from a spiritual and even mental perspective. The release from that spirit was called **loosing**, setting that person free and removing the binding that was constricting their life.

Jesus whole ministry was about overpowering the fully armed strong man – we know him as Satan. Satan had bound the earth to his influence. Jesus had come to break into Satan's house to bind him through the authority of Heaven, ultimately through the finished work of the Cross – to deliver, or loose people from bondage.

When the Apostle Peter was preaching in the house of Cornelius he makes the overruling authority of Jesus clear when he says that:

|| *"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him." (Acts 10:38 NIV)*

The authority given to Jesus Christ binds the power of the strong man: the thief, the one who steals, kills and destroys – is now subject to the King of kings (ref: Matthew 28:18).

I'm reminded of the vision John had in the Book of Revelation:

"Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." (Revelation 12: 10-11a NIV)

Jesus has given you the power and authority, through His name, to tie up the strong man just as He has tied him up. Jesus said:

"I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you." (Luke 10:19 NIV)

Through Jesus Christ the strong man no longer has the authority to steal, kill and destroy your life. The mandate of this **First Thing** that Jesus is giving us is that we are now to recover all that Satan has stolen from us, whether great or small, by the power of the Holy Spirit abiding within you.

Nothing the devil has stolen away from you belongs to him, he is a thief. God has already made those things available for you to recover by the power of the Cross, the blood of His Son and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Satan has used the power of deception and manipulation to steal from us, but we are to use the power of truth to recover all that he has taken.

According to **Matthew 16:19** the church has been given the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Keys imply unlocking. We have been given the keys to the doors where Satan has hidden our goods.

King David returned from a famous victory against his enemies only to discover that a raiding party had snuck behind his lines and stolen everything they held dear. Their wives, children and possessions. All stolen. Scripture records that David and his men went out and:

"...recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else they had taken. David brought everything back." (1 Samuel 30:18-19 NIV)

David recovered everything. You have the authority to recover all the enemy has taken from you. We sang a song here some time ago called "I went to the enemy's camp and I took back what he stole from me". It's time to recover stolen property.

|| I have an **inventory of stolen items** I'd like to see if you can identify are yours. If you want them back they are yours to come and take back.

1. || Relationships the enemy has sought to destroy

“Some of you will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as a rebuilders of walls and a restorer of homes.” (Isaiah 58:12 NLT)

Recover the relationships between you and your spouse, between you and your children. Between you and your friend. Between you and your employer. Between your brother and your sister.

2. || Personal Promises that God has given you through Scripture

Your bible probably has these promises circled and underlined. The pages were once dog eared and worn. You’ve written your own notes in the margin. These are the Scriptures you memorised once. They related to a promise of restoration, or healing, or that a prodigal would come home.

“For all of God’s promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding “Yes!” And through Christ, our “Amen” (which means “Yes”) ascends to God for his glory.” (2 Corinthians 1:20 NLT)

3. || Recovering the Joy of the Lord

The joy of the Lord is meant to be our strength (ref: Nehemiah 8:10)! The bible promises the joy of the Lord will transcend our circumstances and through the indwelling Holy Spirit He will lavish joy throughout our being. Joy is a product of hope which produces peace. The Apostle Paul said it like this:

“I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13 NLT)

One preacher said: If you have no joy...there’s a leak in your Christianity somewhere!

4. || Recover the Wasted Years

You may recognise years of your life wasted through the consistent raids on your life by the enemy. Anything good you’ve tried to implement seemed to get eaten away by a consistent army of locusts.

“The LORD says, “I will give you back what you lost to the swarming locusts, the hopping locusts, the stripping locusts, and the cutting locusts.”” (Joel 2:25 NLT)

One author prophetically wrote this promise of the Lord like this:

“I would give you back the years the locust has stolen. I will recompense you for the years that the swarmer has eaten. I will pay you back for the profitless years when

*sin ravaged you as the enemy came in... I will now restore those years to your life.”
(2002: Domazio)*

The devil thrives on exploiting our weaknesses causing us to lose time in our relationships, our marriages, our children our jobs and our spiritual progress. Waking up and realising you have wasted years, maybe decades, not dealing with those weaknesses can be incredibly discouraging. It's like the locusts have eaten every bit of possible recovery from you.

Repentance is the turning point. God will restore those years if you cooperate with him.

5. || **A Spirit of Faith that preservers until it sees results**
6. || **An Expectation for the Miraculous**
7. || **The Blessing of God on our homes, families, nation**

I could go on with this inventory of stolen items but I'm sure we all recognise our stolen property.

Jesus said you must first bind the strong man. Then you are to plunder his house and take back your goods. The strong man has already been defeated by Jesus Christ. Now with the power of the Holy Spirit residing in you – you need to go in and take back your possessions in the name of the Lord.

|| [RESPONSE]

Prayer: Holy Spirit, I believe you want me to recover all. Small or great, I believe you will help me to recover these things into my life, into my family and into the world in which I live.

Acknowledgment:
[2002: The Power of Spiritual Alignment. Frank Damazio. City Bible Publishing. pp 55-83]